THE

WAR OF THE GIANTS,

AGAINST

JAMES GORDON BENNETT,

AND OTHER RECENT MATTERS,

BY THREE LOOKERS ON IN VENICE.

No. 1.

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NUMBER I.

When the emperor Napoleon was advancing with rapid strides to the completion of his purpose in the conquest of the world, the dread of his power, and the detestation of his tyranny roused a spirit of resistance in the hearts of the people of Europe, which effected, in two campaigns, what the hired coalitions of confederated sovereigns had in vain attempted to perform during a war of twenty years. But the people were not incited by their fears alone—a more generous principle of action was supplied by the hopes they entertained for themselves—hopes founded on the promises of their respective rulers, which encouraged them to expect that the destruction of the Corsican stratocracy should be succeeded by the general establishment of free constitutions and representative governments. How these promises were fulfilled is too well known to need a long recital. The downfall of Bonaparte was scarcely achieved, when the allied sovereigns conspired together to put down and extinguish that very spirit to which they had been indebted for all their triumphs, and thus lost an opportunity, such as may probably never recur, of establishing their thrones in the hearts of their subjects and securing the course of constitutional monarchy for centuries to come, by associating the title of King with every generous and glorious recollection.

The position which James Gordon Bennett occupies in reference the war of extermination which has been of late, and is at this moment, waged against the Herald from every section of the country is not unlike that of Napoleon. The Press had unhappily become, in the hands of this war, a lever to shake the very foundations of social and moral order. The consequences which have already resulted from his perversion of the power placed into his hands by this great moral engine are but too obvious. Among them are to be numbered, denunciations of hatred towards the greatest and best men of the country—mockery of religion—vain and ostentatious contempt of all sound learning, experience, and knowledge—interruption of

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the courses of honest industry—and derangement of the concerns and enterprizes of the most retiring and private individuals; at length the outrages of the common enemy of society have compelled the spirit and honor of the friends of good order and religion to take the field.

The call which has been made upon American patriotism, from private as well as from public sources, to resist the evil tendencies of the New-York Herald, by circumscribing its circulation, is at once manly, rational, and seasonable: that it will be a successful call, leading to a solid and lasting public benefit, is a little to be doubted, as the result of any attempt must be doubted in which the weakness of man follows the line of his duty. But, if journalists imagine that the powerful co-operation they have received from private individuals has been tendered to them for the sole purpose of putting down Bennett, without any reference to more lasting and more beneficial results, they are grossly mistaken. It is the utter extirpation of an evil which has grown to be intolerable that the public desires, and not the transplantation of that evil from the pages of the Herald to those of some other equally polluted sheet. It is with a hope that the exposures which have lately been made may lead to a complete reformation of the New-York Press, that men of influence and respectability have put their shoulders to the wheel, not to afford a mere temporary triumph to Bennett's enemies, many of whom would gladly leap into his place and pursue (if possible) a still more detestable career. Are those editors who have so bravely entered the arena of controversy on this occasion prepared to carry on the war until every base lampooner and libeller that infects the city shall have been hunted out of their ranks, or is the sword of retribution to be sheathed as soon as Bennett's saturnalia of undetected villainies and unpunished crimes is over? Is a desire to protect in future the sanctuaries of private life, against the intrusion of those harpies who prey upon the vitals of society, the great incentive to action? Is it a wind which may be depended on—a great monsoon of fiery indignation, which will clear the seas of those reckless pirates who have so long plundered public and private characters under false colours? Or is the object to be accomplished by this terrible crusade nothing more than the subjugation of one individual, and the battle to be given up as soon as the belligerents have passed in trembling precipitation the paltry rubicon of their spite? Circumstances have lately occurred to warrant the assumption, that the leaders of this expedition, although *apparently* imbued with very plausible intentions, care no more for the morals of the community than the Grand

Cham of Tartary, and that like the allied sovereigns, mentioned above, they would much rather perpetuate the existence of those very evils which they complain of so piteously at present, than to hazard the loss of one of those privileges preposterously considered concomitant with the liberty of the press, by any serious attempt to suppress them. Should we have erred in our calculations, we shall not be found wanting in readiness to retract:—the circumstances about to be related, however, will show that we could not by any stretch of ingenuity arrive at a more charitable conclusion.

Like every other great power in human affairs, the press becomes an instrument of virtue or of vice, according to the character of the person to whom it is intrusted; like the Amrecta cup of Kehama, it confers an immortality of bliss or of agony as it is taken by a virtuous or a corrupted spirit. That there should be candidates for those desperate and guilty distinctions, where the press becomes a dark and awful power that strikes at once at the purity of our domestic hearths and the sanctity of our religious institutions, is to be wondered at only by those who are ignorant of the cravings of poverty and vice, or how rapidly they are maddened by personal hostility. From the beginning of newspaper history the temptation, the mind, and the means of all these scourges of society have identified the family. The casual difference in their clothes makes but slight distinction in this long pedigree of guilt. The same habits of flagitiousness and profligacy, black falsehood and thirsty cupidity, stooping to any prostration to slake its throat in the well of human suffering, are characteristics of the race. But of those men, some have been of a rank of accomplishment and ability that might almost excuse their influence on the public mind—potent and lofty spirits, made to wield the elements of disorder, and awing men into a brief admiration even of their virulence by its ingenuity and daring.

James Gordon Bennett, although not exactly a freebooter of this calibre, possesses yet a genius which marks him out from the grovelling slaves who crouch to a pill vender, and fawn only to destroy; and as such he is much less dangerous to the community than many of those smooth tongued jesuits who have joined the present crusade, in hopes, no doubt, that they might thereby escape whipping themselves—creatures who, under pretence of reforming society, even now inundate the country with an unexampled profusion of slanderous and blasphemous publications, without excepting the day of sacred rest—offsprings of pollution, who daily taint our atmosphere with the venomous expirations of their malignant lungs, and by whom the bleeding sacrifice of feeling—the propagation of scan-

dalous doctrines—and the destruction of all the moral bulwarks of society, are held as nothing; so that in the hour of confusion and overthrow they may gorge themselves to satiety on the mangled reputations of their lacerated victims. Some there are who look upon Bennett as the mighty Dragon that stalks abroad, depopulating our fields, wasting our pleasant places, poisoning our fountains, and menacing our civilization. But can it be a matter of less serious alarm to observe how many other journals have fallen under the direction either of avowed enemies of religion and of society, or of persons whose sole principle of action is their own selfish interest? Can any respectable man look through the columns of a widely circulated morning penny paper whose "*respectability*" has been so laughably endorsed by the "Star," without recurring with an inward shudder to the infamous affair at Newark, or without a feeling of HORROR and disgust at the obscene nature of some of its advertisements?—Has the attention of the gallant Webb—the respected Hale—the erudite Stone—and the brilliant Benjamin, never yet been attracted by the scandalous proceedings of an infamous Sunday paper, now in the interest of a meretricious mountebank, for the express and avowed purpose of prosecuting a gentleman, who, whilst an editor himself, never admitted a word of sinister tendency into the pages of his journal—never penned a line but with a view to improve, to refine, and to instruct mankind—never alluded to our political, social, and moral institutions except with feelings of reverence and respect—never spoke of our citizens, our authors, or our statesmen, but in terms of deference and regard! And yet the degraded satrap, who, for a scanty pittance, panders to the vices of the most detestable quack that ever imposed upon a generous community, has also clad himself in the panoply of his *spotless character*, and gone forth to give battle to the dragon. What substantial difference in society to recognize between the half serious, half jesting lampooner of the Herald and the thorough paced ribaldry of the unmitigated miscreant alluded to above? Precisely that which consists between the devastation of the locust and the destruction of the slug.

The feeling against the abuse of the Press is universal, but the abuse is not to be checked by impotent alarm. The press is not to be put down by petty coalition;—as well might we attempt to put down the pestilence by imprisoning the air. The *abuse* is to be purified by the *use*. The same instrument that "pastorale signum" which the lips of pollution inspire with sounds of discord and profanation must be taught the sounds of peace—it will echo the one as well as the other. The activity of the public mind cannot be ex-

tirpated, but it is the part of wisdom to turn this weedy and pernicious exuberance into productiveness and beauty. The Press, they say, must be taught to respect the sanctuaries of private life—yes, but unless the teachers be themselves free from imputation and reproach—unless they be men distinguished for purity of principles and propriety of conduct—stern and inflexible in the tenets of their morality—untainted by the breath of infamy or shame, their solemn denunciations will be accounted as little better than mockery, and their threats of vengeance as the frantic ravings of so many maniacs. *Consistency* is the true sublime in moral conduct, and fixed principles of any kind can alone command respect and admiration.

Were the career of many of those editors who have arrogated to themselves the right of dictatorship in this case to be closely examined, and their past actions submitted to the fiery ordeal of retrospective criticism, it is much to be feared that the investigation would afford as little edification to the public as cause for rejoicing to themselves. The mind, however shallow and servile, is intrinsically independant and will be its own law giver, it is folly therefore to suppose that the world, although fickle and ever ready to be

"Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw,"

can be cajoled into a belief that those declamatory tirades which have of late enlivened the proverbial dullness of our large city journals in relation to the Herald, were penned with any other view but to gratify personal animosities and to revenge private wrongs. Among those who have taken a prominent part in this affair, and have been throughout foremost in expressing their abhorrence of the arch libeller and desecrator of public morals, there are two excellent though somewhat *too facetious gentlemen*, who appear, indeed, to have met like the puritan and the prostitute on the banks of Lethe, in Garrick's farce, with an equally convenient oblivion of the characteristic incidents of their previous career. But there is yet a third: and when we recall to our bewildered memories the perplexing circumstance that this man is an advocate for the suppression of abuses of the Press, it seems to us that we recollect with labour the crowning incident of some grotesque dream, or that in some pastime of the season he has drawn for the amusement of the city a temporary character, ludicrously appropriate only from the total want of connexion and fitness between the festive part and the individual by whom it is sustained.

No person in the healthy possession of his senses can have forgotten the savage and infamous attacks that have been made within

the last two years upon the private character of one of the greatest writers that this country has ever yet produced, by the very men who are now lamenting the abuses of the Press, and anxious to annihilate the individual who has had wit enough to follow in their illustrious footsteps. With what relentless and despicable inveteracy Mr. Cooper has been persecuted is a matter of history; what dastardly language has been resorted to in profanation of his honoured name must be in the recollection of every body. What sources of mortification and insult have been struck out to harass his troubled spirit and hurl him into an untimely grave will, it is to be hoped, be yet a subject of sincere grief and bitter regret to those who in their great arrogance have lifted the ruthless hand of oppression against one whose brilliant talents have built him an empire in the hearts of millions. And yet these "honourable men," *now that it suits* their convenience, have thrown themselves in battle array to resist the encroachments of the Press!

And what offence had Mr. Cooper committed, to excite so much asperity in the minds of these sensitive pigmies? It is alledged, that he has spoken lightly of our institutions, and not always with respect of his fellow citizens. If there were any truth in the first charge, Mr. Cooper has amply vindicated his character in his great Naval History of the United States: the current of national pride which evidently runs through the author's very fibres as he details the important events in which his gallant countrymen were engaged, is a sufficient evidence of that lofty patriotism and uncompromising rectitude of principles which characterize the man and all his earlier works. As for the fact of Mr. Cooper not having always felt in the complimentary vein when alluding to his countrymen, is, at best, a miserable excuse for all the defamatory epithets which have been so unsparingly heaped upon him by the *moral portion* of the Press. Nothing is so much calculated to bring a nation into ridicule and contempt than those displays of inordinate vanity into which shallow minded people are so frequently betrayed during their residence in foreign countries, claiming for themselves every virtue under the sun—contending for the palm of superiority even when their pretensions can least stand the test of enquiry, and denying with vehement gestures the existence of such a thing as a foible or a blemish on their national escutcheon. Great as our importance is in the scale of nations, it would be folly to deny, that in point of excellence and perfection in the arts of refinement we have yet much to learn: it would not be easy to form a conception of any general state of society, less adapted to call into play the best affections of

the heart and the higher qualities of the intellect, than that which prevails in New-York at the present day. The general social intercourse established in great cities has seldom been very directly calculated to effect this purpose; but here it seems formed with views expressly opposed to such a purpose, and it seems to have realized those views in a very remarkable manner. The utter want of support which the higher order of literary works have hitherto experienced amongst us, would warrant the assumption that we have no relish for the more instructive shades of literature, and that we are equally indifferent to those attainments of a purely classical and intellectual cast. The scenes of violence and barbarism that are constantly enacted in Congress and other legislative assemblies, leave us little to boast of on the score of civilization and moral restraint; and yet, because Mr. Cooper has had the moral courage to descant on these topics, in the spirit of philosophic discrimination, the Press resists his strictures as vile slander, and attributes his remarks at once to malice, ignorance, and ill will. How true it is that disparaging assertions are always most galling and most unpardonable in proportion as they are founded on truth, and that, when man assumes the prerogative of his Maker and attempts to judge, according to his conception, of the heart and secret actions of another, he does so too often in reality by the evil scale of his own.

There is another essential point, touching which, as Americans, we are daily rendering ourselves amenable to severe censure and animadversion—to witness—our treatment of strangers. It is a remarkable fact, and there are hundreds in New York that can testify to the truth of the assertion, that a single letter of introduction from a respectable source, will in England open at once all the floodgates of human sympathy, and invariably command every mark of attention and regard that English hospitality can bestow. Americans above all, no matter what their station or pursuits, have hitherto been particularly favoured in this respect; and we could enumerate a long list of names that had never figured beyond the counting-room or the retail shop in their own country, the bearers of which not only found access to the best English society, but have even been known to tread the golden dust of palaces, a privilege for which thousands of wealthy and influential native citizens often yearn for in vain; indeed there is not a nobleman throughout the whole continent of Europe, before whom rank and station bend more readily than in the presence of a plain unpedigreed American citizen;—in short, an American can do what he pleases in England, with the exception of violating the laws of the land, and every avenue that leads to success

is open before him. He may embark in mercantile business, or pursue the career of letters, encouragement is always at hand: no insulting allusions are ever made to his nation; no malignant whisper is ever heard to make him curse the land of a stranger. There are no men sufficiently deformed in mind and mean of soul to conspire against his peace;—No! there is no Benjamin to make him feel that "there is no place like home."

How different—how utterly at variance with the example set before us in our reception of strangers from the same country, when the pursuits of pleasure, the desire of information, or the spirit of enterprise tempts them to seek our shores! How we delight to ferret out any of their little peccadilloes! With what eagerness we inquire at the hotel where the stranger is sojourning, to ascertain his mode of life and private habits? With what recklessness and unconcern we drag him before the public—raise doubts as to the validity of his pretensions, and write him down a "foreign vagabond!!"

An American in London may indulge in as many eccentricities as his love of notoriety happens to suggest, and no one will be found so destitute of charity as to make the subject of his foibles a theme for a scandalous paragraph. He may be betrayed into festive excesses, and the following morn find him an inmate of the watch-house; but if he be only true to himself, no reporter is so heartless as to betray his secret, and no degrading exposure of his frailties will cause his relatives to blush for the lamentable event. Here, on the contrary, if an Englishman have the misfortune to remain long enough amongst us to attract notice, no device will be spared to bring discredit on his name: and if he should happen to be set upon at night by a troop of twenty or thirty lawless ruffians,—by no means an uncommon occurrence in New York—the only redress that awaits him is to be stigmatised in the next day's paper as a "foreign vagabond."

Should an American resident in England become involved in difficulties, or be overtaken by disease, every facility is afforded him to better his condition, every generous effort is made to enable him to recover from the shock, and no question is ever raised to attack his honor or impugn his integrity. If pecuniary reverses befal an Englishman in the midst of us, ten thousand suspicions are forthwith set afloat—conjectures of the most horrid and mischievous nature are started in quick succession, and without hesitation or compunction he is pronounced a "foreign vagabond."

An American relying on the exertion of his talents for an increase of his income, finds in England an almost ever-ready market for the

productions of his pen: for notwithstanding the immense competition which the combination of so many powerful minds bent on the same errand and pursuing the same object has of late years caused to exist, there is a degree of interest attached to every American, which when united to superior abilities and brilliant intellectual endowments, never fails to command attention and insure respect. But let a stranger become a candidate for the honors of literary distinction in this free country, and you shall see how quickly we set about to turn the interloper off the field! No matter how universal his attainments, how profound his researches, how great his erudition, how fertile his invention, how chaste his language, how classic his diction, how irreproachable the tenor of his conduct, we take good care that he shall not float down the stream of public life without being submerged in its eddies, or hurled down its cataracts—for is he not a—"foreign vagabond."

Let not the reader imagine that this digression if it may be called such is altogether irrelevant to the subject more immediately at issue in these pages. James Gordon Bennett is not the only "foreign vagabond" against whom the envenomed shafts of the moralists of Wall street have been aimed at: nor Mr. Cooper the only man that has been goaded on by cruelty and oppression to act in opposition to the dictates of wisdom.

Of all the tyrannies to which men were ever yet called upon to submit, that of certain members of the Press attempting to control their contemporaries for the express purpose of monopolizing the privilege of abusing individuals—of running down institutions, and holding up to ridicule and contempt those who dare oppose their career of demoralization and of mischief, is the most odious and insufferable. That this is precisely what the Wall street papers, with the assistance of the raving jackall of the Signal, are seeking to effect, no man who is at all acquainted with the history of newspaper warfare in New York can for a moment doubt. What would be said, for instance, of those citizens, who are intrusted with the superintendance of our fire companies, if in case of a frightful conflagration threatening to plunge our city in one great vortex of misery and gloom, every engine was brought to play on some isolated building or favoured spot, while the flames were suffered to destroy every thing around without intervention, and the tide of devastation to pursue its desolating career without check? The cases are somewhat parallel, and when the public beholds so much spleen and froth consumed, for the purpose of imposing restraint upon a particular individual, while others of the same caste are allowed to wield the firebrand of discord unmolested, it has some claim to forgiveness if it presume to be scep-

tical as to the propriety of the attempt, and the sanity of those that made it.

Had those pious champions, who have "braved the battle and the breeze" in this small affair, been really actuated by disinterested motives—had the public good and the welfare of society been the revolving springs of all their actions, they might have found long before this, objects as plenty as summer flies to vent their fury upon; and every way deserving their solicitude and castigation. But as no demonstration of this sort has ever been made—as paper after paper has been permitted to carry on its depredations on character without interference—as individuals of merit and distinction have at all times been vilified and trampled on with impunity—and as, moreover, the moral champions themselves have never yet found time to put into practice those excellent doctrines which have been so fervently expounded in their respective journals, there is too much reason to believe, that had not Bennett's paper possessed the merit of superiority on certain mercantile points, and its boastful arrogance in that respect become too galling for silent endurance, the creature might have continued on his mission of infamy until the day of resurrection, without any effort being made to stay the contagion, or a single sword being drawn in defence of our threatened institutions, and the invaded sanctities of life.

Who does not remember the disgraceful transaction which caused so much sensation not more than a month since; when through the looseness of the Press, and that avidity for gain which characterises too many of its conductors, a man whose name had always been associated with every thing that is honorable in feeling and exalted in intellect, was suddenly made a marked object for every creeping thing to spit its hoarded venom on? We allude to the case of Mr. Tasistro: this gentleman came to the United States some years ago, and being then in the possession of all those advantages that are calculated to command station and beautify existence, he forthwith became the magnet of attraction, and no *soirée* or rout was given in New York without his society being solicited; but no sooner had he been tried with affliction, and the world been apprized of his pecuniary reverses, than the latter true to itself and to its principles began to scatter tempests round his blighted way. The man whose means are for ever shifting with the tides of fortune, let his conduct be ever so irreproachable, he cannot guard himself against the malice and prejudice of those who acknowledge no sin, but that of moping in poverty and misery. Accordingly the world always ready to strike the proud and trample on the sensitive, assailed Mr. T. with its thou-

sand weapons, and might have driven him, in a moment of despair, to seek shelter as well as revenge in satirical composition, had not the buoyancy of intellectual endowments sustained him in his elevated position, and at last suggested the idea of the *Expositor*,—a journal which raised him at once in the estimation of the public, and gave him rank with the highest spirits of American literature.

From this time Mr. Tasistro became the subject of universal panegyric and adulation: from Quebec to Missouri the Press was loud and unanimous in his praise; and it was every where admitted that "*no Journal was better calculated to lead to the cultivation of sound literature, a pure taste and good morals than the Expositor.*" The Courier & Enquirer, although unwilling to derogate in the slightest degree from the merits of other weekly papers, made no hesitation in pronouncing the "Expositor" as superior to them all; and as uniting to untiring industry, &c. &c., pure and correct taste, the highest degree of talent on the part of the Editor. The Star, whilst "*applauding its freedom from every thing that would savor of personality, harshness, or indelicacy,*" allowed that style in which Mr. Tasistro's critical essays were written, "*was marked by a polish'd, high-wrought tone of feeling and cultivation, seldom seen in any work of the kind.*" Mr. Daniels, one of the most discriminating judges of such matters, thus expresses himself in the Gazette—"*the moral aim and tone of the* Expositor *are undoubted, and its standard of excellence such as cannot fail to have a favorable influence upon public feelings, as well as public taste.*" Even the Sun, whose hostile attitude towards Mr. Tasistro in a late affair, has been a theme of general reprobation and disgust, in speaking of his Journal as having no equal in point of sterling literary ability in the country, adds—"*Its contents are not merely marked by the elegance of diction, elevated thought and purity of style which characterize them, than by the force of argument, the logical perspicuity and the unbiassed fairness which its accomplished Editor displays on all subjects of which he treats.* In short, throughout the country the same opinion was reiterated, and the same ideas expressed, only in different language. To parents engaged in the education of children, the Expositor, was every where recommended as an important auxiliary—to scholars as highly useful, as tending to assist in the selection of good books; exercise and improve their critical avenue, and afford much salutary amusement. Even that rigid moralist and truly pious man, the late Mr. Southwick, of Albany, bore testimony to the excellent character of the work adding that "*it was an indispensable appendage to our periodical literature.*" Of Mr. Tasistro's high sense of honour and

rectitude of feeling, we find a specimen in the "Notice to Correspondents" in the Expositor, dated Feb. 2d, 1839, which might well put our great "moralists" of the press to the blush. We copy the paragraph verbatim—

"We beg to assure the gentleman who sent us a paper full of pepper and mustard, touching up some of the members of the Union Club, that he was never more mistaken in his life. Whatever may be the nature of the injuries which he, with some show of reason, proves to have been heaped upon us, as a private individual, by some of the *dramatis personæ*, in his manuscript, shall never be resented, or even dwelt upon in our present public capacity."

Which of the knight errants who cry so loudly against the "foreign vagabonds," connected with the New York Press, had ever yet exhibited a spirit of magnanimity and forbearance approaching to this? and yet Mr. Tasistro, at the time when the above paragraph was written, was not a naturalized citizen: and he had, moreover, wrongs to avenge which might have offered a plausible plea for a different course of conduct.

Upon a cursory review of all these circumstances it is clear that Mr. Tasistro—whether we consider his laborious efforts in the cause of sound literature, the moral and instructive aim of all his writings, his unswerving advocacy of all those principles which tend to elevate and refine mankind, his undeviating tone of urbanity towards all his contemporaries, or the reverential deference which he has always shown in his allusions to our institutions and our public men—was entitled to a large share of public regard, and particularly to the consideration of the Press. If we are desirous that foreigners, on becoming amalgamated with the children of the soil by right of naturalization, should comply with the conventional forms of society, and avoid those crooked and unrighteous paths which evil spirits follow in pursuit of a living, they should be made to feel that propriety of conduct is sure to confer respectability, and that honourable actions will not pass without due appreciation. But to invite strangers to our country, which we publicly do by the inducements held out to emigrants, and then drive them by acts of malice and injustice to seek employment but too frequently uncongenial to their nature, for the pleasure of stigmatizing them as "Foreign Vagabonds," is not unlike provoking an inoffensive man into a breach of the peace by abuse and scurrility in order to bring an action of assault and battery against him afterwards. That this has in some respects been of late our treatment of strangers, Mr. Tasistro's case is sufficient and convincing proof; for on what other ground but that of *his not* being to "the manner born," can we account for

that ignoble apathy that the Press of this city (if we except the high-minded proprietors and editors of the Spirit of the Times, Express, Tatler, Atlas, Sunday Mercury, and Paul Pry) has exhibited on the occasion of the late conspiracy against that gentleman, and that too by men of such infamous notoriety? Can it be that a base desire of creeping into the good graces of a wretch, who for the last six years has plundered our community by a process of successful impostures—who has been arraigned for a greater number of misdemeanors and been suspected of more atrocities than ever swelled a convict's catalogue of crimes, caused the extinction of that honourable principle known by the proud title of "Esprit de Corps." Heaven forfend that such should be the case! Although the fact of certain lengthy advertisements from the notorious individual above named having appeared lately in the columns of those papers, that had either stooped to the degradation of aiding and abetting in the conspiracy or otherwise forbore expressing an opinion in favour of one of their own class and calling, would more than intimate that such was the melancholy fact. For our own part, we discard the idea as too painful to be entertained. We are rather inclined to believe that the fear of involving Brigadier General Morris in the same vortex of infamy with the wealthy caitiff he has so long served, took the tender sympathies of the reformers of the press by storm, as it is well known that when the General is bent upon making "the worse appear the better reason," he has a method of blubbering out his grievances which has caused the commission of more editorial sins than ever can be atoned for: besides he is a native born citizen, and those who have beheld him rising gradually but slowly from a low uneducated apprentice boy to be a Journeyman Printer, and witnessed his extraordinary transition from that congenial sphere of life to that which he occupied until he disappointed his friends and benefactors by an indecent parade of extravagances which led to his present degradation and loss of caste, would fain screen him from the evil consequences of his own misconduct, in hopes that he may yet reform, and like Rudolph, in Der Freischutz, shuffle off the fatal incubus, which while it flatter him with prospects of independence will eventually sink him beyond the possibility of redemption: one thing however is certain that the Herald, against whose existence the energies of the "Moral Press" are directed, has never yet contained any thing half so disgusting, or libellous as what has been caused to be inserted in certain papers relative to Mr. Tasistro, by those confederate boon companions, Brandreth, Morris, and Barnett, while the pusillanimous conduct, the culpable indifference evinced in the

case of that persecuted gentleman compared with the abusive language which has lately been held in denouncing the abuses of the press, is only calculated to produce this conviction—that those who are loudest in reprobating the sins of their neighbours, are always to be found foremost in the ranks of corruption.

As our object is to tear asunder the misty veil behind which Hypocrisy even now chuckles inwardly at its own ephemeral successes, we will pursue the subject a little further, in hopes that the more complete the exposition the speedier will be the remedy. Major Noah, after having borne with characteristic prudence every indignity that ruffianly taunts and indecorous language can put upon a man, has at last been so far roused into action as to place himself back to back to Mr. Park Benjamin, and from that fortified position to take an occasional shot at the inveterate enemy of his race. Since that, the "Evening Star" has been pregnant with moral homilies and redolent of pious observations. This, however, is very little to the purpose. What the public cares to know, is whether the "excellent Major" (we use the fashionable phraseology of the day) is qualified by the purity of his own life, and the goodness of his actions, to become the censor of the public Press; or whether he has not by his own chamelion temperament, puerile disposition, and self-interested motives, contributed largely to the propagation of an evil, the consequences of which he is now beginning to feel.

It will no doubt be remembered, that some eight or nine months ago a very severe controversy took place between Messrs. Porter, of the "Spirit of the Times," and Major Noah, concerning some allegations which the latter had made, detrimental to the character of those truly amiable and talented gentlemen. On the nature of these allegations we are now unwilling to dwell ;—suffice it to say, that they were grounded on some casual remarks which had been made by Mr. Tasistro, in a moment of excitement and in the presence of G. P. Morris; when the latter, who was then a subject of universal animadversoin, with a meanness of soul peculiarly characteristic of the man, made all possible speed to communicate what he had heard under the form of secrecy to Major Noah, in order to gain a paltry advantage over those adversaries whom he had incensed by his participation in the getting up of a certain silly pamphlet, styled "Life in New-York." Major Noah, whose means of self defence are not amongst his most brilliant qualities, soon began to reel and stagger under the heavy musketry of the brothers Porter, and would have fared much worse had not Mr. Tasistro, with chivalrous feelings worthy of a better cause, stepped

into the breach and warded off his antagonist's blows. It is also worthy of remark, that up to this time there existed between Messrs. Porter and Mr. Tasistro, a perfect good understanding, which shows that the latter had no other motive for pursuing the injudicious course he thought proper to adopt, but compassion for the old man, and that in doing so he had every thing to lose and nothing to gain.

What has Major Noah's subsequent conduct been towards the man who, from a pure mobid sense of justice, and against his own immediate interest, came forward to flight his battles, and so freely bled in his defence? We grieve to say—that human ingratitude has seldom been carried so far, and never been exhibited under aspects more heinous and cruel: for not only did the "amiable major," suffer his friend, whom he was bound by every honourable feeling to protect, to shift for himself, but actually yielded to the solicitations of his enemies and persecutors, (in anticipation no doubt of certain considerations,) and freely gave up his columns to whoever might choose to pay a good price for the privilege of abusing him: witness the letters over the signature of "Brandreth and Bailey;" nor is this all—as Mr. Tasistro was either unwilling or unable to pay for the privilege of being heard in self-defence, the generous Major obstinately refused to insert his communications; thus adding injustice to insult, and malice to ingratitude. We know that the Major is fertile in consoling expedients; but the facts cannot be contradicted; they will ever remain a blot upon the character of all persons concerned in this disgraceful transaction. But what shall be said of the man who can descant so forcibly on the abuses of the press and the immoral tendencies of the Herald, and yet is nothing loth to insert in his own paper the most slanderous attacks upon his friends and fellow citizens for a *proper consideration.* The preposterous plea that such libel or libels were only admitted as advertisements, may pass current with Bennett, but it comes with a peculiar bad grace from so moral and so censorious a man as Major Noah. Aspersion and vituperation from the Herald may be borne without a murmur, for the frequency of the occurrence deprives them of their sting: but when a "*respectable*" paper condescends to pander to the vilest passions of the human race, for a *consideration*—when the editor of such a paper presumes upon his influence with the public to seek the ruin and degradation of any person that may be offered up for sacrifice, it is time that the matter were taken up legally, and some effort made to "check the growth of these domestic spoilers," who speak us fair only to allay suspicion, that they may depredate in safety. It is clearly evident that such men are very unfit advocates for the "purity of the Press:" for whatever comes from them, although well seasoned with

sense and pungent moral observations, will only excite derision and provoke contempt.

To illustrate the condition of the New York Press more fully, we will briefly allude to a decision lately given in the Superior Court, in the case of Joseph W. Trust *v.* M. Y. Beach, where a verdict was obtained for defendant. The summing up of the Court was lucid, manly, and satisfactory; and the jury by deciding against the plaintiff, did nothing more than what was due to themselves and to the country: for we perfectly agree with Judge Talmadge, that the book which charges Dr. Brandreth with being an impostor and a malefactor of the worst description, "was not published for justifiable motives," and that no man can be "actuated by good motives in raking up the foibles and faults of a young man after he has risen in society and become conspicuous;" but it is nevertheless true, that in the course of this amusing trial, many curious facts were divulged relative to Brandreth's life in this city and elsewhere, which place the character of the man in the most odious light: for leaving alone the circumstances of his having assumed a name to which he has no title, and being a runaway from justice, the fact alone of his having imposed upon the people of this country by fraudulent pretences, such as *assuming the authorship of works which he knew to have been written by others*, is sufficient to brand him with infamy, and to impeach his veracity ever after. The Sun newspaper, in reporting the case in question, not only gives a garbled account of the prosecution, but makes a ridiculous parade of its triumphs, just as if it had obtained a victory over a reputable enemy; and after sheltering Brandreth with that paternal solicitude, which it always manifests (and with good reason too,) whenever that personage is mentioned, it openly intimates that should it ever suit the "Sun's" convenience to attack the character of any person, however amiable or inoffensive the individual whose feelings have been thus wantonly outraged, had better not indulge in libel speculations, for the Sun knows that "there are yet many other verdicts to be rendered in its favor by the New York juries." Comment on this would be thrown away; unless it were to descant upon the motto, which in one of those extraordinary freaks of fancy that would put gravity out of countenance, the "Sun" has thought proper to assume. We are entirely of the "Sun's" opinion, that libel speculation at best is a contemptible trade, and deserves to be discouraged; but there are so many cases where forbearance is turned into a weapon against him that practices it, that no man is safe in abstaining from recourse to law. The proprietor of the "Sun" ought to be aware that there is *one* libel suit now impending against him, where the plaintiff by allowing a person of this city to reap the

benefit of his forbearance some three years ago, has had the libel (which was refused insertion in the Herald at the time of its first appearance in hand bills,) republished against him lately in the "Sun," having been expressly raked up for the chaste columns of that journal, by its special protegé, Benjamin Brandreth. No wonder that the "Sun" discourses so feelingly and eloquently against "libel peculations." But what would the press have said if Mr. Tasistro had retaliated in the same spirit? What if he had taken up the pill vendor's principal abettor, Morris, and "raked up the foibles and faults" of the last six years of his life? By what strange coincidences the present melancholy state of his affairs have been brought about? What *fatal connexions* have reduced him to a state of dependance on the will of a man whose only merit is the ingenuity with which he contrives at imposition and falsehood!—by what unheard of means the "best and genteelest" Journal in the United States has of late been supported? What the causes of its present limited circulation; and how many of its editors have been forced to seek redress in our courts of law? The subject is somewhat fruitful, and may hereafter be resumed; meanwhile, we will only add that if the "Sun" be a fit preacher of the sanctities of the law, James Gordon Bennett deserves to be *canonized.*

Let not the reader imagine from the tenor of these remarks, that this little work was written for the purpose of palliating the vices of the "Herald," or with a view to detract from the real importance of any attempt that might be made to teach its Editor that to hold up wisdom and virtue to the world's admiration, is much more becoming the conductor of a public Press, than to apply the lash, however dexterously, to vice and folly. We are fully convinced that the exposure of vice, although it may in many instances be of essential service to the wayward youth, on his entrance into the world; yet on the other hand, it has its seductions and its blandishmehts; and those may, by talent and address, be so clothed in a captivating garb, that the youthful heart glowing with passion may long to become familiar with them, and to partake of the enjoyment which their possession is supposed to afford.

Our object for taking the field against those Jesuitical pretenders who have undertaken to preach distinctions which they do not seemingly understand, and to impose regulations which they are determined never to be ruled by; is to create if possible a healthier state of feeling on the subject of our invaded sanctuaries of life, by showing the imminence of the danger and the necessity of universal resistance. Those men who have taken the lead in the crusade against the Herald, may talk as loudly as they please, but

they can make no impression on the vast expanse of public opinion for their motives of action are well understood, and every body is aware that

> "Their aim is mischief and their zeal pretence,
> Their speech rebellious against common sense."

The way, therefore, to put down this terrible evil—an evil which is daily spreading the seeds of dissention among families, and snapping asunder the most precious and most endearing bonds of frindship, is by action, combination and unanimity: by that species of co-operation which to be effectual must be the result of a regular and systematic union of Individuals. Let meetings be held and resolutions passed to resort in future to such lawful measures as may be deemed expedient to restrain the publishing and circulating of libels and the public will soon perceive by its effects the line of demarcation between such resolutions and the declamatory extravagance that has of late flourished in the columns of many of our city papers.

The proneness on the part of the press and of the public, for publishing and perusing defamatory paragraphs has already been productive of incalculable mischief; for in many instances the venomous dart has reached men of the most attractive accomplishments, and of the choicest spirit, who, but for this blow, might have been snatched from the vortex of worldly dissipation, and not only inspired a pleasing hope of future usefulness in the important spheres in which they moved, but realized those hopes ultimately. The wildest flights of guilt are often dictated by the *despair of virtue*, and victims have been consigned to disgrace and punishment by their own sense of humiliation, when the world, even with *all its* severity, was disposed to overlook their offences.

There is no judge, perhaps, so austere as the indignant conscience of a generous and ingenuous mind, and we know not how often, when we condemn and exclude the wild and reckless as unworthy of confidence and as traitors to indulgence, we ought rather to *court them* into a belief that they are less in fault than their own high notions of purity and honour suggest. The gloomiest knell that rings over the fall from virtue is to hear of the lost esteem of those we love!

> "That is the black, the damning scourge,
> Which draws on human weakness to despairing crime."

In this exigency (and as we have shewn before, nothing can be more pregnant with mischief to the welfare of society than the existing abuses of the Press) we would advise that an *Association* be formed, empowered to drag every notorious trafficker in impiety

and scandal before a judiciary tribunal. We remember a remarkable instance of the superior advantage with which the rights of a community may sometimes be vindicated by an *Association.* The prosecutions which took place in England (when we were near twenty years younger) for blasphemy had failed to an alarming extent; something scarcely less than a conspiracy to acquit seemed to have grown up in the jury-box, and the officers of the government were avowedly repelled from prosecutions where no verdict was to be found, and where the simple fact of having been thought culpable by the legislature made the fortune of the *culprit.*

There is a fashion in all things:—the fashion of acquittal in all cases of blasphemy was then advancing into an established rule, and the outrageous menaces mixed with outrageous panegyrics which were used to break down the timid or bring over the tools of popularity were on the eve of destroying all confidence in the administration of the laws. At last an Association honourably came forward, and the infamous Carlile, after an attempt to earth himself in the old refuge of rabble passions, was dragged out, and upon the clearest evidence of wilful and boastful villainy convicted.

But this sentence was not upon a solitary ruffian—it struck the whole tribe at once. The fact, that a blasphemer *could* be convicted broke the spell, both of inactivity of the friends of order and of the impurity of its enemies. From that time, we believe, every prosecution succeeded. The dungeon or banishment soon relieved the country of the burthen of nearly all the original malefactors.—But the breed cannot be entirely extinguished; it exists here in all its pristine ferocity, only pursuing a safer course, and it may be that all our human diligence will not be able to conquer the malignant influences that are made to desolate and to destroy. It is, however, in our power to remove the evil from our doors, and to sit once more in the midst of our families, without seeing the spirits of our children tainted by licentiousness and infidelity. If there must be a reserve of evil, to show to future ages the contrast produced by religion and the laws to that fearful period when the moral world was a waste, abandoned to the dominations and wanderings of savage nature, let it be our honour to raise the great fence against this rabid appetite for blood:—to appoint to the lion and the tiger its wilderness, beyond which it must not stray; and as our strength grows, push into the thicket and the swamp and subdue their sterility, and drive these monsters further within their places of desolation.

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☞ Our next number will introduce different characters and subjects.